Empowering Student to fight against school bullying

Article Critique

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**Annotated Bibliography/Summary**

This article is based on a study performed by four school counselors on the effectiveness of various anti-bully programs and interventions within their school. The study was conducted over a three-year period and consisted of seventh and eighth graders of a middle school within a large suburban public school in the United States.

Over the three-year period, the school counselors developed new programs and improved old programs, based on information retrieved from surveys conducted throughout each year. Several issues were to be addressed to consider effectiveness. At the beginning of the study and consistently throughout, the students were asked if they have been bullied, if they would report being bullied, and if they felt they had the coping skills to handle a bully situation. The baseline answers at the beginning of year one, indicated that almost all of the seventh graders and almost half of the eighth graders had been bullied during that year. It also revealed that very few of the students would report or have reported being bullied, and a high percentage of the students indicated they felt ill prepared to handle a bully situation.

After the three-year study, and further interventions such as an anonymous website reporting system, faculty and staff awareness training, parent training, and empowering students with strategies and skills on coping with bullying, surveys revealed that students felt more free to report bullying via telling an adult or using the website. There were also a lower number of student conflicts in the classroom and hallways as noted by teachers and students. There was also an indication that students felt more confident and empowered which suggested an overall safer school climate.

**Critique**

As noted in this study as well as many others, children who are bullied are more likely to begin showing signs of isolation, anxiety, depression, lower school achievement, lower attendance etc., all which significantly interferes with the learning process. It has also been shown that children who bully are more likely to drop out of school, to vandalize property, and to engage in criminal mischief. Finally, studies have revealed that peer bystanders are affected by bullying as well. Even though witnesses are neither the victim nor the bully, they can still walk away with emotional trauma, by feeling grief for the victim, anger at the bully, or guilt for not intervening. In these incidents, no student remains untouched.

Young, Hardy, Hamilton, Biernesser, Sun, and Niebergall (2009), offer essential elements for the success of school wide anti-bully interventions. The components stated are comprehensive training on the prevention of bullying for faculty and staff, parent awareness workshops, student training on strategies/skills, collaborative school wide commitment, studies on effectiveness, and data sharing with all stakeholders. The article also emphasized establishing a comprehensive counseling program, which follows the ASCA National model.

According to the results of the study on the effectiveness of interventions, it is shown that there was an improvement in the new interventions and strategies on bully prevention. The faculty and staff have become trained on awareness and intervention methods, parents were provided information regarding the phenomenon of bullying as well as signs and signals of the bully and the bullied at school and on the internet. And more importantly, students were offered support, skills training, and coping strategies. By adopting these skills, students will feel empowered and more confident in dealing with the bullying crisis that affects the schools today.

**Reference:**

Young, A., Hardy, V., Hamilton, C., Biernesser, K., Sun, L., Niebergall, S. (2009, April) Empowering students: Using data to transform a bullying prevention and intervention program. *Professional School Counseling*, 12(6), p.413-420.